

2009 On-the-Job Training Program Trainee Interview Report



North Carolina Department of Transportation

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2009 On-the-Job Training Program Personal Interviews with Active Trainees and Recent Graduates

PREFACE

Every year, the N.C. Department of Transportation's On-The-Job Training Program conducts a series of interviews with trainees enrolled in the program. Interviews are conducted across the state at various jobsites to ensure minimal work disruption for both the trainee and contractor.

During the 2009 calendar year, OJT Program staff conducted 250 interviews statewide. Three types of interviews were conducted, including: initial, follow-up and graduate interviews. These provide periodic feedback intended to help the OJT Program achieve its goal: *"...to provide training opportunities for women and minorities, which will increase their participation in every skill craft/operator classification in the highway construction industry."*

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with OJT trainees employed with 48 contractors. Between January 2009 and December 2009, OJT Program staff interviewed 188 active trainees. Of these, 124 were initial interviews, 55 were follow-up interviews and 71 were graduate Interviews.

The Interview Process:

- Upon entry into the program, each trainee receives a letter, in English or Spanish, welcoming them to the program, as well as a copy of their specific training classification.
- An OJT program representative then contacts the contractor and/or supervisor to schedule an initial interview.
- The initial interview is scheduled within 30 days of enrollment with each trainee and serves as an informal OJT orientation session for the trainee.

- Should a trainee be enrolled in a classification that requires 1,000 hours or more, a follow-up interview is scheduled approximately halfway through the training.
- Once the trainee has graduated from the program, a graduate interview is scheduled to determine the effectiveness of the training.

In an effort to improve the administration and quality of the training program, interviews are significant to gain insight from trainees who are enrolled. This feedback helps to ensure the success of the program, not only for the industry, but for the trainees themselves. The demographics of the interviewees are shown below.

Initial Interviews

Demographics

Demographic data indicates that 75 percent of program participants are between the ages of 25 and 50. Caucasian trainees make up 47 percent of interviewees, followed by Hispanics with 31 percent and African Americans with 22 percent of the participants. Native Americans had no participation in the program for 2009. Ninety-four percent of the interviewees were male and six percent female.

Summary

The majority of recruiting into the OJT program appears to have occurred between June and July of 2009, with 43 percent learning about the program from their supervisors. The majority of interviewees stated that they were new to the program, had participated in orientation and received training requirements. Most said that they were mentored and received support from their supervisors and most overwhelmingly felt that they had enough time to learn, received appropriate safety training and were aware of NCDOT's role in the program. The majority of interviewees expected the program to help them receive the certificate and move into a better position, develop new skills and increase their salary. Ninety-nine percent of interviewees felt it was beneficial to meet with an OJT representative during their training. They said that the OJT representative monitored their progress while receiving information about the program. Thirty-eight percent of interviewees were working with the contractor for up to a year before enrolling in the program.

Follow-Up Interview

Demographics

Demographic data for the follow-up interview showed that a majority of the program participants were in the 25 – 50 age group with 75 percent, which is consistent with numbers in the initial interviews. Caucasians made up 49 percent, followed by Hispanics with 38 percent and African Americans with 22 percent interviewed. One Native American and five females also participated in the follow-up interview.

Summary

Data from the second interview shows that 100 percent of participants felt that the training continued to help prepare them for their job. All but one said that they received support and encouragement from their supervisor and were satisfied with the job-related safety training provided. Seventy-one percent indicated that expectation from their employers was to be in a better position coinciding with the first interview. Eighty percent expressed that their expectations of the OJT program were to learn more every day and to receive their certificate. The list of questions used in the second interview was reduced to seven, from 14 in the initial interview.

Graduate Interview

Demographics

Seventy-one graduates participated in this interview process with 63 percent of those coming from the middle two age groups (25 – 50). Under the ethnicity category; however, a much larger percentage of Hispanics (45 percent) were interviewed, followed by Caucasians with 42 percent and African Americans with 10 percent. Six percent of the graduates interviewed were female.

Summary

Ninety-nine percent of graduates were continuing to develop skills they learned during training, were satisfied with the training they received in the program and received the training in accordance with their job classification. Seventy-seven percent received the certificate from NCDOT and from their employer. Seventy of the 71 interviewees commented that the training had provided them with personal benefits. While most indicated that all aspects of the training were important and needed emphasis, some indicated that they would like to focus more attention on particular areas like safety, reading plans and operating heavy machines. One hundred percent would recommend the OJT Program to friends

suggesting that the new trainee has to pay attention during the training. All participants found it beneficial to meet with a NCDOT representative.

Overall Summary

During the initial interviews, seven interviewees said that they did not receive a copy of the training requirements. It is important that trainees receive a copy of training requirements before they begin training. It gives trainees a clear vision of what to expect in each step of the training. Eight trainees indicated that they did not receive orientation to the OJT Program and five said that they have not gotten feedback on their progress from their supervisors. Orientation and feedback are crucial to learning and a critical element in the success of this program. Nine interviewees said that they did not know that NCDOT managed the OJT Program, and the same number said that they did not know that NCDOT monitored their progress monthly. Comparing those numbers with numbers from the year before, 13 and 20 respectively, we can say that the number dropped significantly; however, any rate should be investigated to assure that program participants understand who is sponsoring and monitoring the program.

The pool of interviewees for the graduate interviews notably shifted in demographics, especially in terms of ethnicity. Fewer African Americans (7) took part in this interview segment as compared with the initial interviews (27). Comparatively speaking, Caucasians, Hispanics and females had a good representation in the pool of graduate interviewees.

Overall, it appears that the program is hitting its target and meeting its mission. Issues related to support from supervisors, receiving program orientation, documenting performance and explaining NCDOT's role could still exist in some companies and need to be monitored. Recommendations should be made to contractors to ensure that they keep to the goal of the program, *"...to provide training opportunities for women and minorities, which will increase their participation in every skill craft/operator classification in the highway construction industry."*

Finally, attention should be given to ensuring that participants who have completed the requirements for training receive appropriate certificates from contractors and NCDOT.